

[Herbert Ruft]

EXTRA COPY [260 DUP?]

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER- Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE Sept. 13, 1938. SUBJECT- American & Chinese Folklore

1. Name and address of informant. Herbert Ruff, 3250 A Street.
2. Date and time of interview. Sept. 13, 1938.—9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
3. Place of interview. Wyuka Cemetery, Lincoln
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

None.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you. None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Interview took place in cemetery (Wuyka)

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St. City

DATE Sept 13, 1938 SUBJECT American and Chinese Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Herbert Ruff—3250 A Street

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1. Ancestry. English
2. Place and date of birth. Lincoln, Nebr., Nov. 26, 1884
3. Family (His). 3 boys and one girl, all married.
4. Place lived in, with dates. Lincoln, Nebr., 1684 to date.
5. Education, with dates. Eighth Grade, 1890-1898
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates. Painter, grave digger 1898 to date.
7. Special skills and interests. Agriculture, gardening. Picture and stamp collecting.
8. Community and religious activities. Episcopal Church.
9. Description of informant. Black heavy hair short of stature, medium slender, English features and characteristics.
10. Other points gained in interview. Eager to have records of self and family especially Father, who is listed in Watkins History of Nebraska. Fathers name was George Ruff and he was born in Bedfordshire England, son of Irwin Huff. He came to Lincoln, Nebr., from England in 1881. Reared and trained as a landscape gardner, he became an expert and in 3 years after arrival was appointed superintendent of Nebris most beautiful cemetery wyuka, Lincoln.

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He was member of Nat. Cemetery Assn. Workman-Highlander & Masonic Lodges. Was married in England to Miss Sarah Wagstaff of Bedfordshire England. The children of this union were Herbert (informant) Pearl and Pansy all born in the Wyuka Cemetery, Lincoln.

George Ruff died in Wyuka Cemetery Nov. 21, 1925.

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(Inscription on his tombstone) His Faithfulness and sympathy still live in the hearts of those he served.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE Sept. 13, 1938 SUBJECT American & Chinese Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Herbert Ruff, 3250 A St. at Lincoln. Wyuka Cemetery Lore.

"In the nineties some private funerals used a complete band, which would start playing at the gate and continue playing to the grave and some of the time at the grave. The music varied from dirges and church music to folk music and even national airs.

Also during this era, on Decoration Day, people made it a custom to spend the entire day in the cemetery near the final resting place of their dear ones. They would in fact bring their lunches and eat there.

Now of course, they only stay, usually to decorate the graves.

One night some folks came to the my fathers place which was at the main gate and were very much agitated and excited.

They said that there was a ghostly light shining in the main burial ground. Upon investigation it proved to be the reflection of an electric light on a polished tombstone.

Several people at various times reported that there were mysterious chimes of an unearthly sounding bell coming from the cemetery. These folks were passing on the "O" street road. Some even refused to pass the cemetery on this account. My father spent

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sometime at night for a number 5 of days trying to learn the cause. But it was not until a windy night that it was explained.

The street "O" street and the entering streets were lined with a number of posts, which held chains, strung between them for hitching horses.

When the wind blew, some way or other, some of these chains would strike the iron posts and would give off sounds somewhat like a bell or chimes. Strangely the folks never noticed these sound in the broad day light.

In the early days, of the eighties and nineties, there were a number of chinese, buried in Wyuka.

Their relatives used to come on what I think you would call their Easter and feed the dead. They brought chicken, rice and other foods and placed on the graves.

Also they had liquors, whisky and a sort of wine which they poured over the grave.

Then after sometime they would take up the food and carry it back to their homes or some business house, and have a big feast. Also they would burn what amounted to \$2000.00 in Chinese money over the grave just before leaving. They left their dead, buried here for seven years, at which time they thought the bones would be clear of meat, and so they would dig them up, pack them in a box and ship them back to China. There are no known Chinese buried in Wyuka at this time.

In the grave ceremony, the old timers used a handful of dirt while performing the "Ashes to Ashes" "Dust to Dust" ceremony. One time a Greek Priest opened a casket and scattered a shovelful of earth over the corpse.

I dug graves and saw funerals in the Jewish cemetery at Belmont, North 14th St. These were called 'Wooden Pin' funerals, since the caskets had no nails in them.

The bodies were wrapped in sheets. Some say that if an Orthodox Jew marries outside of their race, they are then and there buried in make-believe and forever lost to the living.

In Wyuka cemetery there is a separate division for the Modern or high class Jewish. My father looked after the digging up and removal of all the Jewish people buried in Yankee Hill cemetery to Wyuka. People used to buy full 12 grave lots in the cemetery. Now they buy lots of single burial spaces.

There is no longer any Potters Field in Wyuka.

Story of the Living.

A man by the name of Jack Robinson came to Lincoln from England. He was staying with some people at their place and one of the men told him to build a fire in the cookstove.

It was not a very big stove and Robinson was used to fireplaces in Eng. He looked in the fire box and thought it was not big enough. Then he saw the oven and decided that was the place for the fire. And so he built the fire in the oven.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE BY WORKER.

Mr. Herbert Ruff makes reference to a grave robbing episode in Wyuka in which the body was removed to Cotner Medical College. It was returned the next night.

He regrets that no record be made of this until or if the cemetery board wishes it mentioned.

He will no doubt recall other stories and details of this cemetery which at the present time has a population of 27,694.

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Informant will furnish snapshot.